

ADVICE FOR LIVING

BY THE REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING



Question: *We have seven children and another one is on the way. Our four-room apartment is bursting at the seams and living space in Harlem is at a premium. I have suggested to my husband that we practice birth control, but he says that when God thinks we have enough children, He will put a stop to it. I've tried to reason with him, but he says that birth control is sinful. Is he right?*

Answer: I do not think it is correct to argue that birth control is sinful. It is a serious mistake to suppose that it is a religious act to allow nature to have its way in the sex life. The truth is that the natural order is given us, not as an absolute finality, but as something to be guided and controlled. In the case of birth control the real question at issue is that between rational control and resort to chance. Another thing that must be said is that changes in social and economic conditions make smaller families desirable, if not necessary. As you suggest, the limited quarters available in our large cities and the high cost of living preclude such large families as were common a century or so ago. A final consideration is that women must be considered as more than "breeding machines." It is true that the primary obligation of the woman is that of motherhood, but an intelligent mother wants it to be a responsible motherhood—a motherhood to which she has given her consent, not a motherhood due to impulse and to chance. And this means birth control in some form. All of these factors, seem to me, to make birth control rationally and morally justifiable.

Question: *I'm a preacher in a small town in Mississippi. For a long time now, I have been dissatisfied with the way things are here. I don't think I can stand the Jim Crow and segregation much longer. But if I speak out and ignore the Jim Crow laws, I'll either be killed or run out of town. I've been praying and trying to figure a way out. What do you think I should do?*

Answer: I can well understand the predicament you find yourself in. You have at least three choices: First, you can leave Mississippi and go to a relatively non-segregated community. Second, you can tacitly accept the Jim Crow laws of Mississippi. Third, you can courageously stand up against them and suffer the consequences. I would not suggest that you accept the first two choices. As a Christian minister and a symbol of the new Negro you have the responsibility to stand up courageously against the Jim Crow laws of your city regardless of the consequences. The fear of physical death and being run out of town should not be your primary concern. Your primary concern should be a devotion to truth, justice, and freedom. Often this means bearing a cross, but like Jesus you must be willing to bear it, realizing that unearned suffering is redemptive. This is hard to do, but it is a sacrifice that we must make if we are to be free.

Question: *My six-year-old daughter has been emotionally upset since the birth of her infant sister. My friends tell me she feels uncared because the new baby receives more attention than she does. What can I do as a mother to help her adjust to the fact of having a new child in the family? My baby has been sickly and requires constant care.*

Answer: This is not at all an uncommon problem. Almost every child feels a mixture of jealousy and love at the coming of a new brother or sister. There are times when the jealous response is dominant. This

seems to be the case with your six-year-old daughter. You therefore have two jobs: to protect the baby, and reassure the older child that you love her. It may be that your child is a little more sensitive at this point than the average child. The child who turns mopey in his jealousy, being of a more sensitive and inturning nature, needs affection, reassurance and drawing out even more than the child who eases his feelings by minor violence. You may also help your daughter by making her feel that the baby sister is hers, not just in words, but in action. Let her help if she feels like it, in getting the baby's bottle from the icebox and bringing the towels for her bath. Let her hold her in her lap while she sits on the floor. Above all don't allow yourself to be overly excited over the new baby in the early weeks. Treat her casually. Don't gloat over her. Don't talk a lot about her. As far as possible take care of her while the older one is not around. Finally, help your daughter to find interests outside the family circle. Much of the jealousy will pass away as the child draws away a little from her parents and builds a position for herself among her friends.

Question: *Do you believe that the development and use of nuclear weapons of war should be banned?*

Answer: I definitely feel that the development and use of nuclear weapons of war should be banned. It cannot be disputed that a full scale nuclear war would be utterly catastrophic. Hundreds and millions of people would be killed outright by the blast and heat, and by the ionizing radiation produced at the instant of the explosion. If so-called "dirty bombs" were used, large areas would be made uninhabitable for extended periods of time, and additional hundreds and millions of people would probably die from delayed effects of local fall-out radiation—some in the exposed population from direct radiation injury and some in succeeding generations as a result of genetic effects. Even countries not directly hit by bombs would suffer through global fall-outs. All of this leads me to say that the principal objective of all nations must be the total abolition of war. War must be finally eliminated or the whole of mankind will be plunged into the abyss of annihilation.

Question: *I am a widow in the mid-fifties. Recently, I met and fell in love with a 28-year-old man. My friends say I am being foolish; they say this man is only after the money my late husband left me. But they are wrong. I love this man deeply and I'm sure he loves me. I'm sure my late husband would understand. Do you think we should go ahead and get married despite the objections of my friends and the catty talk we'll have to face in the community?*

Answer: I think you should think a great deal about this venture before you enter it. I must frankly say to you that the possible disadvantages of such a union are far greater than the advantages. With such a tremendous age gap there is little possibility for compatibility, either physically or emotionally. Marriage is at bottom a state of adjustment between two individuals who are seeking to be one; and with the adult life of your mate still unfolding it is almost impossible for this adjustment to take place. It is probably true that you love this young man, but love must always be tempered with reason. Love devoid of rational and practical considerations can become a wild and fanatical emotion that can only lead to psychological disintegration.

Address all questions to The Rev. Martin Luther King, Johnson Publishing Co., 1820 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago 16, Ill.